

BROKEN PITCHER.

memory of one known in early life, and who, in consequence of much excellence, was accidentally recalled to my mind this evening, and, perhaps, the recital of some circumstances connected with this history may not be uninteresting or unprofitable, as they serve to show what apparent trifles sometimes give a bias to character for good or evil, and often color the current of a whole existence.

Mrs. Lorin was early left a widow with an infant daughter and a son of nine years, dependent on her for support. She had a little cottage of her own, and with the rent of a small spot of ground adjoining, added to the produce of her garden, she managed, by the practice of the strictest economy, to live quite comfortably. Edgar, her son, showed early a great love of books, and though uncultivated himself, and incompetent to direct his choice, she encouraged him in this, because their minister praised his studiousness and lent him books, and would often come and converse with him about the subjects upon which they treated, and it pleased her to hear how well he could talk. Her pride was also gratified by the complimentary remarks of visitors upon his sober, studious habits, and at their predictions that he would be something some day; and she had an indefinite idea that his books were, somehow, going to make a great man of him. And well might the widow be proud of her son, for in addition to the promise he gave of a mind far above mediocrity, he possessed uncommon beauty and symmetry of person, and much amiable disposition. Besides caring for her son, and attending to her garden, she found it necessary to render occasional assistance to a neighbor who was struggling to keep her son at the little school kept by the minister, he rendering her some assistance in his power, apart from his usual reading and study. Things went on thus till Edgar had reached his fourteenth year, when the burden of his mother was increased by the death of a widowed sister, who left to her care an infant daughter, having no other relative to whom she could entrust it. As the infant came without any addition in the way of means, except the household furniture of her sister, the widow was more straitened than before; besides, with her additional cares, her health grew more feeble, and it was sometimes with difficulty she could perform her accustomed labor. Now the consequence of all this was, that she became fretful and irritable—annoyed by trifles which before had no power to disturb her, and by the law of reaction, this rendered other difficulties greater. Though a good housewife and an affectionate mother, this good woman had one fault, which was excessive particularity about trifles; and this, as is often the case, required frequent sacrifices of the comfort of those around, and led to many more serious faults—among them irritability of temper.

The cottage of the widow consisted of only two rooms below stairs, the kitchen and a little room in front, which served for parlor. This she had fitted up with some of her sister's furniture, and it was her especial pride. A neat home-

made check carpet of bright colors covered the floor; there were white curtains at the windows, and at one side a little table, covered with a cloth so white and ironed so smoothly, it looked like polished marble. On this, in summer, there was always a flower-pot, kept full of fresh flowers from the garden, and over it hung a small looking-glass garlanded with asparagus and flowering vines. Another flower-pot graced the mantel opposite, and the fire-place was filled with green bushes. Then, there were some shelves of books, and a lounge and easy-chair covered with green calico. I have described this room thus particularly, for it seems before me now—such a temple of neatness did it seem to me, when I used to stop there on my way to school, and was sometimes permitted to take a flower from the gathered ones that decked it.

Edgar used to love to retire with his book into this little room, and sitting in the easy-chair, or reclining on the lounge, realize in part the paradise of the poet Gray. His mother did not actually prohibit this, for he protested he could study so well no where else; the noise of the children and the opening and shutting of the doors in the common room interrupted him—the chambers were bare and unfinished—and he did not enjoy it so well. She had made up her mind that he must study somehow; so, though she manifested some uneasiness and apprehension, when he was in possession of her sanctum, and made sure his shoes were perfectly clean—for he did not seem to have inherited his mother's extreme carefulness—he was allowed occasionally to occupy it.

He was several times in serious danger of being deposed from his possession, from leaving the books scattered about, or from disarranging the lounge-cushions—for his mother was not sufficiently versed in the peculiarities of genius to console herself with the idea that disregard of the common laws of order and rule, is claimed as one of its distinguishing characteristics. One day, in trying to lower the looking-glass, that he might see himself, and regulate his gestures, as he recited a heroic poem that he was going to speak at school, he threw down the flower-pot—a pitcher much prized by her, because it had been the property of her sister—and broke it; the discolored water running over the table-cover, and from thence to the carpet. Besides, in falling upon it, he cut his hand in such a manner as to be unable to use it for weeks.

This was an outrage too great to be easily overlooked. He expressed much contrition, and promised greater carefulness for the future. But his mother was resolute, and he was banished his favorite haunt. She justified herself by the thought that it was only a whim of his: he could study very well somewhere else, and it was no use indulging him. So she told him he might study in his chamber or in the room with the rest of them; she could not run the risk of having everything spoiled. Edgar made at first some effort to study in his altered circumstances, but did not succeed very well; the thought of what he regarded as unkindness on the part of his mother, tending, also, to depress his spirits and to magnify the difficulties in his way. The injustice, too, with which he fancied he had been

treated, roused the stubbornness inherent in his nature, and rendered his endeavors less earnest. His mother saw nothing of this; neither did she realize the danger that would ensue from having his habits of study, which had been to him, in his hours of leisure, a safeguard against idleness or hurtful companionship, broken up.

One evening, not long after his mishap, Edgar was sitting moody and discontented by the kitchen fire; it was not yet quite dark, and there was no candle lighted; two or three sticks of wet wood lay on the andirons, and his mother was trying in vain to make them burn. She was not in a very pleasant humor, for household matters had gone wrong,—the baby had caught cold and was crying fretfully in the arms of the little girl,—her brow was overshadowed, and she looked gloomy and cheerless as the aspect of every thing around. Edgar sat looking into the fire-place, dogged and silent; he felt discontented and unhappy, and logged for his quiet nook in the parlor again; and he almost resolved that if his mother persisted in her determination to deprive him of that privilege, he would not study at all. His mother had some vague idea that he thought by showing a little obstinacy, and persisting awhile in idleness, she would be brought to retract her prohibition, though she did not give the subject much thought. She felt sure he might do better than he did, but thought it would all come round right after awhile—the philosophy with which many inefficient people console themselves. Brooding over his disagreeable feelings, the cheerlessness around oppressed the spirits of Edgar; he felt dissatisfied with himself and displeased with his mother, who he felt was the cause of his present unhappiness; he did not realize how much her cares and feebleness excused her, if their home was not at all times so peaceful and pleasant as he could desire. After sitting thus moodily for some time, he rose, and, going towards the door, opened it to go out. As he was shutting it behind him, his mother asked, rather sharply, "Where are you going, Edgar?"

"Out here," he answered, sullenly.

"I wish," said she, in the same fretful tone she had used for the last hour, "you would split up some wood, and see if you can't make this fire burn, instead of running off. I thought I would wait and see if you would not do it without being told, but I might have known better."

Edgar went out without answering, and advancing to the little gate in front of the house, he leaned across it, and drawing his cap down over his eyes, gave himself up to unpleasant thoughts, and was more unhappy than he had ever been in his life before. This was his first fit of real despondency. A dark cloud seemed impending over him—he knew not why; and, as is more frequently the case in early youth than is imagined, the gloom that clouded his spirits was unilluminated by a single cheering ray.

Now, had he possessed a judicious friend, skilled in the mysteries of the human heart, his thoughts might easily have been diverted into a new channel—and the mischief that ensued from this state of feeling have been averted. He had not stood thus long, when he heard the sound of voices coming down the street towards him; as

they drew nearer, he perceived a couple of his school-fellows walking very fast, and talking earnestly and gesticulating.

As soon as they saw Edgar, one of them hailed him, and invited him to accompany them to a circus, at the town a couple of miles distant, whither they were bound.

"Oh, no," said the other, deridingly, "don't ask him to go—he would not be mother's good boy if he should go with us and have a little fun." And he went on a little, saying that he at least must be there in time for commencement, while his companion delayed to persuade Edgar to go with them for this once; repeating by way of inducement, the many wonderful things to be performed which were set forth in the bills. The price of admission too was only two shillings.

Putting his hand in his pocket, Edgar took between his fingers a couple of dimes he had received a few days before, for going on an errand for a gentleman in the neighborhood, and with which he had intended to purchase some writing materials; but his hesitation was only for a moment—without saying anything farther, he opened the gate, and passing out, started down the street in the direction of the village.

"Good!" his companions shouted, at their success; and running on together, they soon heard the music in the distance, and in a few moments afterwards, they had paid their shillings, and were seated with the crowd of spectators.

The arena was brilliantly lighted, and just as they took their seats, twelve beautiful cream-colored horses, elegantly caparisoned, came gaily forward, with their splendidly dressed riders, and entering the ring, proceeded to perform various graceful evolutions. This display was followed by numerous exhibitions of skill and power, all possessing the charm of novelty for our hero, the actors in which seemed to him to be doing all those wonderful and graceful things merely for their own amusement.

His companions, to whom such things were not new, explained to him what he did not understand, and were well pleased to witness his delight and astonishment; as this was the first time they had succeeded in drawing him with them to a place of amusement.

"Is it not fine?" they would say to him occasionally. "Are you sorry you came?" "Is it not well worth a shilling?" or "Is not this better than to be moping at home with your musty books?"—and he felt for the time that it was.

When Edgar got home that night, his mother was in bed; but she had left the kitchen door unfastened for him. He opened it carefully, proceeding to his chamber as noiselessly as possible, but he did not escape the watchful ear of his mother, whom the unusual circumstance of his remaining out past bed-time, had kept waking.

"Edgar," said she, "pray where have you been so late? I was much alarmed about you, and should not have gone to bed—but Mr. Sandford said he saw you with James Morton. So I supposed you were there."

"I have not been very far," he answered, and hastened up stairs to bed. Long he lay awake that night, and all that he had witnessed passed again before him in imagination. A new world

seemed opened to him. He could scarcely realize that those were ordinary mortals upon whom he had gazed. So beautiful—so ethereal they looked to him—so almost superhuman—in their grace and power. But the boys had told him that all this wonderful skill was the result of a course of training, and that any well-formed person could attain like excellence, by going through a similar process. One boy of ten years old, they told him, received thirty dollars a week! "What a sum!" he thought! And then he remembered how often people had said he was well formed; and was he not quick and powerful beyond other boys of his age? And, then, how delightful must it be to travel about so much, and see so many different cities! and to be so splendidly dressed! His mind had received a new bias. The heroes of olden time, of whom he had read in history, and whose deeds excited in his breast a noble emulation, sunk into insignificance in his mind before these knights of the ring. He had had vague longings for the possession of some excellence that should distinguish him in the eyes of the world. They were the inarticulate murmurings of young ambition; and now his fancies took a shape more real, and he seemed to see a short road to that which he had thought to attain only through much toil. The efforts of the greatest and best of men had perhaps attained for them only censure, during their lives; these, for what must be in itself a pleasure, received constantly the applause of admiring multitudes—and then how richly were they rewarded!

How much better than to endure a life of toil and privation, to be spoken of only when beyond the reach of human applause! And then his innate love of the beautiful was gratified by the grace and splendor he had seen. How delightful to dwell daily with those beautiful beings—to be one of them—like them to receive the homage of admiring crowds! These thoughts pursued him the next day at his work, sometimes lightening it, sometimes rendering it distasteful to him; and when he tried to read, his mind wandered from the page before him—the images it presented were tame and sombre in comparison with those that peopled his fancy. He confessed to his mother, at breakfast, where he had been on the previous night, and how it had happened. She reproved him for going without her leave, and when he knew she would disapprove of such things; but she little thought any consequences seriously affecting his future welfare would ensue from the act. She observed that he "acted odd," as she expressed it, afterwards. He did not appear to hear her when she talked to him, and would sometimes sit for a long time looking into the fire, as though in deep thought. He had never behaved in this manner before—but she was not in the habit of reasoning much from cause to effect; and so long as he performed his accustomed duties, and held occasionally a book before his eyes, as he sat in the kitchen corner of an evening, she gave the matter no very serious thought.

In the course of a few weeks, he was told by the boys, who had before persuaded him to accompany them, that there was to be another circus at the same town, on the next evening, which

would far exceed, in splendor and the skill of the performers, the one they had before seen. They were to set off at an early hour on the following day, and wished him to join them.

There was nothing he desired more than to go with them, and he debated with himself whether it would be best to ask his mother's leave and risk her refusal, which he had reason to fear; or, as he had done before, go without it, and brave her displeasure afterwards. He finally concluded he would tell her of his desire to go, and he hoped the many plausible things he had to say in favor of his wish would win her consent. But should she refuse, he had partly resolved he would for once go without it. Other boys often did so, as they had told him, and though they were reproved severely, at first, and sometimes punished a little, it soon "blew over," as they said. He asked his mother's permission as he had purposed, and she expressed her astonishment that he should come to her with such a request, thinking that she would comply with it, knowing, as he did, her disapprobation of such things. "It was only a waste of time and money, running after such things. It was no place for boys—they could learn no good there. An idle, swindling set, going around the country to pick up money. They ought all to be put in jail."

All this was nothing new to Edgar; he had heard it many times before; and now he had formed an opinion of his own, which did not at all accord with it, so it was all lost on him.

Too much hurried and perplexed to reflect on the matter, could she otherwise have done so, his mother thought that, as heretofore, the expression of her disapprobation would be sufficient to deter him from doing whatever she disapproved. Had she reasoned with him affectionately and kindly, and pointed out to him the real danger, to his habits and morals, of frequenting such places, he might have been deterred from going. With desires and passions strengthening with his strength, much wisdom and a firm and gentle but judicious hand were needed to direct them aright. His mother's manner irritated and vexed him. He saw nothing that would make amends to him for the loss of the pleasure he had promised himself, and he resolved, though he did not say so to her, to go at all hazards. As soon as he could do so unobserved, he ran up to his chamber, and dressing himself in his Sunday suit, he put his little purse in his pocket, and hastened to join his companions at the place appointed for their meeting. "Hurra!" they shouted, on seeing him, "does your mother know you're come—or did you give her the slip, again?"

"Never mind that," Edgar answered; "I'm here, and I promise myself a good time."

"That we shall have for certain," said they, and off they all ran together. They reached the town before the circus had arrived from the place where it had stopped the day before, and went a little way on the road to meet it. They had not proceeded far when they came in sight of it, "fixing up to enter the town." As soon as everything was arranged in the right order, the music struck up, and they set forward.

By this time, a troop of boys and men had collected, who followed the pageant through the

town to the ground selected for the exhibition. Edgar was with the train, and when they reached the ground, he remained, watching curiously the operations that were going forward, as the men proceeded to erect the tent, and make other preparations. In the course of these, it chanced that some article was wanted from the village to assist in their work; and one of the men, looking round, said—

"Here is a smart, active-looking lad. Perhaps he will run for us."

Edgar, who was the one designated, pleased with the compliment, signified his willingness, and, receiving his commission, set off with the speed of a deer to execute it. When he returned, which was very quickly, the proprietor was standing near, and remarked him as he came up.

The man thanked him, and told him he should have a free ticket to the performance. Edgar gave him some farther assistance, and, while he was doing so, asked a great many questions, and made many enquiries about their mode of life, that evinced the interest with which it had inspired him. After answering his queries, the man said, looking at him, and laughing, as he spoke—

"You would do for one of us, I think," for he thought he perceived his drift. "Don't you think so?" he said, appealing to the proprietor, who stood near.

"He seems a fine, likely lad," he answered, "whose activity might be made of some use. How old are you, my boy?" he said, addressing him.

"Fourteen, last month, sir."

"Do you live in the town?"

"No, sir; my mother lives two miles in the country."

"Then you have no father?"

"No, sir; my father died five years ago."

"Have you ever attended a circus?"

"Yes, sir; once."

"Well, what did you think of it? Did you think you would like to be able to perform such wonders as you saw?"

"I think I should, sir."

"Well, my lad," said he, "you would not require long drilling. You could soon do so with ease."

Seeing the boy's eyes sparkle, as he looked up towards him, enquiringly, the man explained to him farther their process of training, and the parts for which he thought him particularly fitted. Edgar looked thoughtful, and when the proprietor was soon after summoned away, he pursued the conversation with the man with whom he had been first conversing, who, perceiving what was passing in his mind, took good care to set everything in as favorable a light as possible.

The proprietor, observing how much Edgar was interested, did not lose sight of him. During the evening, he remarked the wonder and delight expressed in his countenance, and his enthusiastic applause. Just before the close, as he sat convenient, he stepped up to him, and said, in a low tone—

"My lad, I would like to speak with you a few moments. Can you call at the hotel?"

"Yes, sir," Edgar replied, scarcely knowing what he said, in the tumult of his feelings. Did the man wish to engage him? he thought. It chanced he did not get a seat near his companions, during the evening; so they were not aware of this request; and, when they joined him, after leaving the tent, he thought best not to apprise them of it, as he did not know what might happen: so he told them he had concluded not to go home that night, but to remain in town with Harry Wilkins, an acquaintance of his, which he really intended to do, if his conjectures were not right with regard to the business of the circus man with him. So they went on, and left him, and he proceeded to his interview, the result of which was an engagement to join the troupe, and he left the town with them, the next morning, at an early hour.

When his mother found, on the day that he had yielded to temptation, and accompanied the boys to the village, that he was absent, she suspected where he had gone, and her suspicions were confirmed by one of the neighbors, who had seen him on his way. She felt sorry and displeased, and resolved to take some means to prevent such flagrant acts of disobedience in future. She went to bed as usual, thinking it probable he would remain for the evening performances, and consequently would not be home till a late hour, but she left the door unfastened for him, that he might enter when he came. When she found, in the morning, that he had not come, she supposed he had stopped with one of the boys who had accompanied him, and when, at the usual breakfast hour, he was still absent, she felt little surprise, concluding they had been up late the night before, and had not risen so early as usual.

The forenoon passed, and still she looked for him in vain. Putting on her bonnet, she stepped over to the residence of one of the boys, where she thought he would be most likely to stop, to enquire for him. Here she learned that he had remained in town, all night, but with the intention, as the boys supposed, of returning in the morning. She went home, and felt no serious alarm till it began to grow dark. Then, she feared some accident had befallen him, and got one of the neighboring boys to go and see if he could learn the cause of his delay. The messenger returned before bed-time, with the intelligence that he had not been at the place spoken of, nor could he hear anything of him. Mrs. Lorin now became seriously alarmed. A consultation of the neighbors was held, and a couple of men volunteered to go to the town, but they returned as unsuccessful as the first.

All subsequent search and enquiry proving equally fruitless, it was thought best, by the neighbors, to impart to Mrs. Lorin, their suspicions relative to the course he had taken, for many circumstances, and some remarks which Edgar himself had made to the boys, led them to think he had gone off with the circus company. And it was not long before these conjectures were confirmed by a merchant of the town where Edgar had first visited the circus, who, during a short sojourn in a neighboring city, had seen Edgar, and witnessed some of his feats. He had stopped at the same hotel, and though Edgar tried

to avoid him, had found an opportunity of speaking a few words with him. He enquired after his mother, and sent her a few dollars in money, but expressed no contrition for the grief he had caused her, nor any desire to return. The gentleman said he would hardly have recognized him, had he not heard his name, so much was he changed—though he had scarcely been absent a year. Instead of the modest, thoughtful appearance which had formerly characterized him, he had a swaggering, defiant air, wore his hat on one side of his head, smoked cigars, joined them at cards, took a dram, and was loud and boisterous as the rest.

The widow continued to toil on, broken in spirit, the burden of her cares increasing, her strength declining, and her means growing more narrow. She had heard no tidings of Edgar for two or three years, and mourned him as one dead.

One evening, about six years after his departure, having finished her labor for the day, Mrs. Lorin was resting herself in the little room which was once Edgar's favorite retreat. She sat on the lounge where he used to sit, and taking up a book that lay on the table, she opened it, and his name in his own handwriting, and some verses he had inscribed on the margin, met her eye. Long she sat, sad and thoughtful, dwelling on the memory of her son, now, she feared, lost to her forever. She thought of the time when she had cheerfully borne toil for his sake, strengthened by the hope that she should one day see him distinguished, though in what way she had no definite idea. She called to mind the satisfaction he seemed to derive from pursuing his studies in this favorite nook, then she thought to herself—"I wish I had permitted him to continue them here even after his act of carelessness; possibly he might not then have been led away in the manner he was,"—though she did not look upon herself in any way culpable.

"Persons little know what is to befall them," she used to say, when speaking of the matter with her neighbors, "or for what end they are bringing up children;" and she thought, for such was her philosophy, that if he had not yielded to temptation at that time, he would have done so at some other, "if it was in him, and was so to be," "for whatever is to be will be," she said, "and we cannot avoid it."

While Mrs. Lorin sat there, musing sadly alone, she heard the sound of horses' feet approaching rapidly. Drawing aside the curtain that shaded the window to look out, for travellers did not often pass her secluded dwelling, she saw a man alighting from an open carriage at the gate; throwing the bridle of his horse over a post, he advanced hurriedly to the door. A sudden trembling seized the widow, she knew not why, as she proceeded to open it. A middle-aged, respectable looking man stood on the steps, who, bowing, inquired if that was the residence of the widow Lorin? Answering in the affirmative, she asked if he would not walk in? He was in much haste, he said, but would step in a moment, and make known to her his errand. After he was seated, he inquired of the widow if she had a son named Edgar?

"I once had," she answered, "but whether he be still alive, I know not: it is long since I heard anything from him; if he is living, he has forgotten his poor old mother." And at thought of what might be his fate, she began to weep.

"He is alive," said the man, "and I have come to you with tidings from him."

"Heaven be praised!" ejaculated the widow, "for if so, he may yet repent of the wickedness of which, I fear, he has been guilty."

"I grieve to tell you, madam, though your son lives, he lies on a bed of illness, to which I have come to summon you."

After struggling with her emotions for a moment, rising from her seat, she exclaimed—

"Where is he? take me to him immediately."

"He is at the house of a gentleman by the name of Allen, about twenty miles distant, who told me he was a relative of yours."

"Oh, yes, I know him well—a cousin of my mother. How came he there? Is he very ill?" enquired the widow in a breath.

"I have not seen him," the man answered, "but Mr. Allen told me he did not consider him dangerously so. He employed me to come for you, and begged me to lose no time, as your son was very impatient to see you; so if you will prepare yourself, we will set off as soon as possible."

Mrs. Lorin hastened in to a neighbor's, and acquainting them with the tidings, she hardly knew whether of joy or sorrow, requested that a young woman, a member of the family, might be permitted to go and stay, during her absence, with her daughter—a feeble, sickly girl—who increased, rather than lightened the burden of her cares. In a few minutes the last charge "to be careful," including a variety of details, was given to Betsey—for nothing could divert the course of the widow's ruling passion,—and seated beside the messenger, she was proceeding rapidly towards the town where her cousin resided. After going a little way in silence, the man informed her of some further particulars concerning her son, with which he had become acquainted; the substance of which was—that he had arrived at the house of her relative, two days previous, in a very weak state, and on the next morning was unable to leave his room. They had supposed it was merely exhaustion, as he had been travelling on foot for several days, but as he continued to grow worse, a physician had been summoned, who said he would not be able to move for some time, and the young man had begged his mother might be sent for. Though the time seemed long to the widow, they soon stopped before the gate of her cousin's dwelling, and he came out to welcome her, and conduct her into the house. She was much agitated on seeing him—and scarcely able to answer his kind enquiries concerning her health. After seating her in the parlor, he went to bring his wife, who was busy about some household affairs, as the invalid was sleeping, and she had left him in charge of her daughter. The good woman came, and endeavored, as well as she was able, to comfort the widow, assuring her that she trusted her son, who seemed more like one worn and exhausted by fatigue and privation than really diseased, would soon recover by careful nursing and the joy of being again with

mother, and she went to ascertain if he had waked, that his mother might go to his apartment. She returned in a few moments, saying that he still slept. His mother expressed a desire to go and look on him as he slept—so Mrs. Garner led the way to his room.

It was a small, neat chamber, only partially shaded; the bed of the invalid occupied a curtained recess at one end. Silently the widow approached to look upon her son. One thin, emaciated hand lay on the cover, but the face was partly turned from her. She knelt by the side of the bed, and took that thin hand in hers. Her sobs awoke him, and when she raised her face from the bed clothes, where she had buried it, his was turned towards her, and his hollow, lustreless eye met hers. She could scarcely suppress a shriek—for in the wan spectre-like countenance before her, she recognized hardly a trace of her bright, beautiful boy, as she had seen him last.

"My mother!" he exclaimed, stretching out his arms towards her.

When she released him from her embrace, and laid him gently back on the pillow, she perceived, as the light from the window shone more fully upon his face, that it was disfigured by the small-pox.

"Oh, Edgar!" she exclaimed, sitting down by the side of the bed. "How much you must have suffered, to have changed so much. Oh! why did you leave me thus! No one has cared for you as I would have done."

"Yes, mother," he said, "I have indeed suffered much, and sinned more; but I have learned this, that suffering is ever the consequence of sin."

"Heaven be praised!" ejaculated his mother. "I hope my son, you have not learned this too late."

In a few days, when it was thought he was sufficiently recruited, he was taken home, and he bore the journey very well. The joy of the thought that he was once more to behold scenes he had loved in early years, gave him strength.

One could hardly have recognized, in the emaciated being, with lustreless eye and haggard brow, who, supported by pillows, occupied the lounge in the little room where he had requested them to be placed for him, the bright and buoyant boy, who a few years before, full of health and hope, reclined there, weaving bright visions of happiness for the future. The room—everything about him, was the same. The fire-place was filled with green bushes, the looking-glass was garlanded as in days gone by: even the pitcher he had broken, nicely cemented, stood in its accustomed place on the little table, filled with flowers. All wore the same appearance as in former years—he alone was changed. His luxuriant curls, which had added so much to his beauty, were closely shorn; his once beautiful countenance was fearfully marked too by small-pox. The eyes, so full of eagerness and hope, were sunken and expressionless; his attenuated form had lost its grace, and his tones, once so full and musical, were harsh and hollow.

One evening, when his mother was sitting by him, alone, and he seemed better and more cheerful than usual, he related, at her request, the adventures that had befallen him during the years

of his absence. He spoke of his feelings when he left home. He was prompted by ambition and allured by the attractions the life he led seemed to present, but all this would have been insufficient to allure him from his home, which had hitherto seemed the brightest spot of earth to him, had not its light been dimmed. For the first few months he had enjoyed his new mode of life exceedingly, and scarcely thought of his home; then, for a time, he longed for the familiar faces of his friends, and felt sad and lonely. But his companions rallied him so much on this, and urged him so strongly to join them in their various modes of amusing themselves, and killing time, as they termed it, when they staid, as they sometimes did, for a considerable length of time, in a large town—which amusements consisted principally of drinking, gaming and kindred sports—that he grew ashamed of the quiet ways for which they ridiculed him, and was led to comply, believing, such is the influence of example and association, that not to do so, was mean and spiritless, and he could not be manly otherwise. After continuing in this way for several years, during which time he had contracted many pernicious habits, and become familiarized with many vices, his employer, partially intoxicated, quarrelled with him for some imagined offence, and made use of such abusive language towards him, and ill-used him so much, that he determined to leave him, and try his fortunes elsewhere—which he did the same evening without apprising his employer—as the bills were then posted up in which his name figured largely.

After roving about for awhile, engaging, for a short period at a time, in various employments, of each of which he soon tired, he obtained a situation as barkeeper in a city hotel. This suited him very well for awhile, though, when reflection came, he often wondered at himself that it did so. When he looked back on his past life, and thought how peaceful and bright it had been, he longed to taste again its quiet peacefulness—but the "creeping rind" of sin seemed every day hardening and strengthening, and encroaching more and more on his better nature: though he longed to shake it off, and sometimes made efforts to do so. At last weariness and despondency began to take possession of him. He saw himself shunned and contemned by all good people; no one aided with counsel and encouragement his endeavors to return to the right path, but rather "backward pulled his slow resolves;" so feeling himself an alien and an outcast on the earth, he plunged more deeply into vice. Falling in with a young man of pleasing manners, but of rowdy habits, he was persuaded to accompany him to the city of C—, where they took lodgings, and began to look about them for some means by which they could obtain money.

A few evenings after their arrival, his companion was out, as he said, to make some purchases. During his absence a sheriff called in search of him. A quantity of jewelry had been missed at their last stopping-place; and as it was known that his companion had before been guilty of similar offences, he was at once suspected, and they were traced to their present lodgings. Upon search, the articles were found in his trunk, and Edgar was

arrested as an accomplice; but his comrade, who had probably got notice of the affair, was not to be found. Edgar was committed to prison to await his trial, and there, in the solitude of his cell, black despair seized him. No one, he said, could describe the agony of mind he endured during that period of confinement. He reviewed his past life, and resolved, if he could once more be set free, to forsake his evil ways, and he prayed for opportunity and strength to fulfil his resolves. When his trial came on, he was acquitted, but was soon after seized with small-pox, then prevalent, from which he suffered severely, barely escaping with his life. As soon as he was able to leave the house, weak in body and penniless, he set out to reach the home, for which he now yearned, and after suffering a great many privations, had arrived at the house of his cousin, just as his last remaining strength was failing him.

He never left that room again, till he was carried to his last resting-place, a few months after. His mother still lives in her little cottage, supporting herself and her feeble daughter by the labor of her hands—her sister's son residing with a clergyman near. Her form is bowed with the weight of grief, more than years, and her hair is blanched to perfect whiteness. She follows mechanically the round of her accustomed duties; but no hope in the future cheers her on. Every day she visits the grave of her son, and this melancholy pleasure seems the only one of her existence.